

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 767

By Pody

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of the late Ralph Alexander McKee, Sr., on the occasion of his induction into the Wilson County Agricultural Hall of Fame.

WHEREAS, agriculture has been a cornerstone of Wilson County since the county's founding in 1799, and those citizens involved in farming have always been a vital part of the community; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly specially recognize those outstanding citizens who dedicated their lives to promoting the importance of agriculture in our society; and

WHEREAS, one such estimable individual was the late Ralph Alexander McKee, Sr., who has been posthumously inducted into the Wilson County Agricultural Hall of Fame for his hard work and commitment to continuing the legacy of the family farm in Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, born on April 12, 1917, in Wilson County, Ralph Alexander McKee, Sr., was the son of Tom and Byrdie Knox McKee and was raised on the 413-acre family farm originally purchased by his grandparents, Alex and Martha Haley McKee, in 1877; and

WHEREAS, a 1936 graduate of Wilson Central High School, Ralph McKee earned a Bachelor of Science degree at Tennessee State Teachers College, now known as Middle Tennessee State University, in 1940 and was drafted into military service during World War II; he spent most of his four-year tour of duty assigned to Base Command in Reykjavik, Iceland; and

WHEREAS, in 1944, Ralph McKee married Jeanne Justice, and this joyous union produced two children, Carol McKee Turner and Ralph Alexander McKee, Jr.; the young couple purchased a farm in the Milton community after Mr. McKee received his military discharge; and

WHEREAS, a respected member of the Milton community, Mr. McKee served in numerous leadership roles for the Milton Community Improvement Club and was a Ruling Elder of Hopewell Presbyterian Church in Milton; and

WHEREAS, in the early 1950s, Ralph and Jeanne McKee purchased his parent's family farm and worked the land alongside his brother, until Ralph McKee suffered a catastrophic illness at the age of forty-four that caused him to end his active participation in farming activities and necessitated using the land for cattle and hog farming; and

WHEREAS, the 1970s saw Ralph, Jr., and his wife, Opal, begin the operation of a dairy farm on the property, as Ralph McKee, Sr., began a new career as the first executive director of the Wilson County Water and Wastewater Authority, in which position he would serve until his retirement; and

WHEREAS, still committed to agriculture and rural life, Ralph McKee, Sr., played an important role in the preservation of the heritage and history of Wilson County agriculture and expanding services to rural areas in his capacity as a member of the Wilson County Court, now the Wilson County Commission, on which he served for twenty-seven years; and

WHEREAS, playing a key role as chair of the Agricultural Committee of the Wilson County Court, Mr. McKee was instrumental in securing the land and funding for the James Ward Agricultural Center, which promotes the preservation of Wilson County's agricultural past and is home to the award-winning Wilson County Fair; and

WHEREAS, proud of his agricultural roots, Ralph Alexander McKee, Sr., passed down the love of the land to his children, and his legacy continues with his three grandchildren and five great-grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, the Wilson County Agricultural Hall of Fame honors those dedicated citizens who committed their lives to developing and maintaining the highest standards and principles in their chosen vocation, and it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly honor the memory of Ralph McKee for his valuable service to agriculture and the farming community; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED TENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby honor the memory of the late Ralph Alexander McKee, Sr., upon the occasion of his induction into the Wilson County Agricultural Hall of Fame, reflecting fondly upon his many contributions to upholding the agricultural traditions of Wilson County and the State of Tennessee.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.